

## No. XXVII.—GORDIUS WORMS.

Among the snakes sent to me by Father Anglade from Shembaganur is a Gordius Worm. I have now seen several of these curious nematodes, which are remarkable for the tenuity of their calibre coupled with their length, reminding one of a fiddle-string. One specimen was found in the mules' drinking trough at Drosh, Chitral (circa 4,500 feet) in April 1910, during very cold weather when snow was on the ground. I sent this to Professor A. E. Shipley who forwarded it to Professor Camerano of Turin, and it was pronounced a *Gordius zavattarii*, Camerano. Another was killed in my outhouses in Almora (5,200 feet) on the 2nd of January 1911, on a bitterly cold day when sleet was falling. It measured 495 mm. (1 foot  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches), and was exactly like an animated fiddle-string. Another came to my notice in Dibrugarh, Assam, date uncertain, but it was in the winter and the weather cold. Another was found in the drinking water supply in Shillong (circa 4,800 feet) where it created considerable excitement from its extraordinary activity. This was sent to me as a snake for identification. A similar worm was noticed by me in a puddle by the road side left by recent rain, above Newara Eliya, Ceylon (circa 7,000 feet) many years ago, and astonished me by its activity. All of these appeared to me to be the same species. The specimen from Shembaganur however is very much compressed, and the body of greater calibre than in the previous specimens I have seen, and is probably another species. When forwarding the first mentioned specimen to Professor Shipley I asked for information about life habits, and obtained the following reply.

"The Gordian Worms fertilise each other, and lay their eggs free in water. They twist about amongst plants. The egg gives rise to an embryo, which bores into some water mollusc or insect, and encysts there for a bit. This mollusc or insect is generally eaten by another insect, such as a mantis or a beetle, and the larvae grow very largely in this second host, absorbing its tissue. After a time the worms emerge free, often a large number on the same day, giving rise to the idea that there has been a shower of worms."

Considerable mystery surrounds these extraordinary worms which appear as if by magic. Some natives declare they fall with the rain, and in Chitral they firmly believe they are generated during falling snow.

It is probable that many of our members are familiar with these nematodes, and it would be interesting to collect more specimens to determine the number of Indian species, and their distribution.

BANGALORE,  
November 1920.

F. WALL,  
Lieut.-Col., I.M.S.

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 NO. XXVIII.—A PYTHON'S LONG FAST.

The following is an extract from a neighbouring planter's letter:—  
 "Herewith the facts about the python. I shall be interested to hear what the Bombay Natural History Society say about it, if you think it worth informing them. The python was a young one  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet long. It was caught, without being injured some time in 1911 or 1912. It was kept in a wire cage for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years. During that time it ate absolutely nothing. It was tried with frogs, and a pigeon was in its cage for 5 or 6 days. The pigeon had to be removed as it started bullying the python. It had a dish of water in its cage always, but there is no absolute proof that it drank. During the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years it changed